

Getting the Message Out: The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP)

As the outcomes of so many clinical studies converge to underscore the fact that, in many cases, the onset and progression of type 2 diabetes can be prevented or slowed through early interventions, there is a pressing need to quickly disseminate the ensuing health recommendations to the general public. The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) is a collaborative initiative of the NIDDK and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that uses over 200 public and private partnerships to promote, through education, early diagnosis and improved treatment and outcomes for individuals with diabetes. A key feature of the program's partnership is the participation of individuals who represent communities of African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Native Americans/Alaska Natives, and Asian and Pacific Islanders, communities disproportionately affected by diabetes.

The NDEP is conducting a series of diabetes awareness campaigns using the theme, "Control Your Diabetes for Life." This theme is built on the landmark clinical trials that showed the importance of blood glucose control in preventing diabetic complications. By reinforcing this theme, the NDEP encourages patients with diabetes to manage the disease closely in order to live healthier lives. The campaigns target both general audiences and populations disproportionately affected by diabetes. Television, radio and print public service announcements, educational materials, and information kits for the media and communities, are helpful products of the NDEP. The program is currently developing campaigns to encourage health care providers to work with their patients to improve glucose control, and to identify, diagnose and treat children with type 2 diabetes.

The NDEP is also joining forces with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the

American Diabetes Association to inform the public that good diabetes management is more than just lowering blood glucose. Control of blood pressure and cholesterol is crucial to help prevent heart disease and stroke—the leading killer of people with diabetes. This new public awareness campaign comes in response to recent studies that show a dramatic link between diabetes and heart disease. Research now shows that people with diabetes can live longer and healthier lives with relatively small decreases in blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol. To communicate the importance of comprehensive care in simple language, the "ABCs of Diabetes" have been developed. The "A" stands for the hemoglobin A1c test, which measures average blood glucose over the previous three months. "B" is for blood pressure, and "C" is for cholesterol. This approach was developed because the vast majority of people with diabetes are not aware that they are at very high risk of cardiovascular disease and that this risk can be greatly reduced with appropriate treatment.

The NDEP is also the primary mechanism for translating the impressive results of the NIDDK's recently completed major clinical trial, the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), to the public and to health care practitioners (see accompanying text: "Preventing Type 2 Diabetes and Its Complications). This multi-center trial showed that even a relatively modest exercise and weight-loss program could significantly prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes in those at risk for this disease. Importantly, these findings applied across all ages and ethnic/racial groups studied (individuals from minority groups who are disproportionately affected by type 2 diabetes represented approximately 45 percent of the DPP study population). Based on these scientific results, the NDEP is now being expanded so that this critically important prevention message can be broadly translated.